



# MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## Mt Albert station under development



### **A Line Through Mt Albert**

It has been a part of Mt Albert for 133 years and now the railway station, hidden in a gully behind the shops, is getting a major face-lift. The station comes with a fascinating history as Michael Field discovers.

It has always been something of a sore

point in Mt Albert, that the suburb lost a mountain so the city could have a railway line. Around a third to a half of the mountain was quarried out, and sent by a small railway line down to the site of what is now the Mt Albert railway station.

Aside from the big gap on the eastern side

of the mountain, little physical remains of the railway line to the station – other than some odd property boundary shapes on maps and a back street called Ballast Lane that had been taken by the government in a proclamation in the Gazette of 1879. And then there is, of course, the Western Line itself, resting on solid Mt Albert scoria.

The line, from Auckland to Helensville and on up north eventually, was opened in 1880 along with the Mt Albert station. Ever since, there has been something of a commuter service from the suburb to the city although the quality, especially in the 70s onward, was decidedly poor. As most will have noticed, this year all Auckland's lines are going electric – 75 years after Wellington's did. As part of the upgrade the once bleak Mt Albert railways

station is undergoing \$8.8 million refit to serve the around 2000 people a day who use it. It is not the first rebuilt at Mt Albert; the original station was destroyed in a fire in 1909. A new signal box built a year earlier survived and served the station, both manned and later unmanned, until 1966 when the line was double-tracked. The box was donated to the Museum of Transport and Technology at Western Springs.

### **RAILWAY STATION DESTROYED AUCKLAND,**

*August 28. Mount Albert railway station was totally destroyed by fire last night. The loss is estimated at £200.*

*Hawera & Normanby Star, 28 August 1908*

For the most part the line was a matter-of-fact part of Mt Albert except for a surprisingly regular problem with accidents on level crossings. Even in the days when cars and trains moved slower, newspaper files recount accidents.

In 1906 "a married man named Brooks" was killed when he was getting off the train at Mt Albert when he fell under the wheels. In 1928 the motor milk delivery van owned by Mays and Howe of Mt Albert was smashed at the Gladstone Road – now Carrington Road – crossing.

"The van was wrecked, it being badly smashed on the left hand side," the Auckland Star reported. "The front wheel was splintered to matchwood, the glass windscreen was torn out and the roof damaged."

Cecil Howe, 33, the driver, was lightly injured.

The Star investigated and found the warning bell at the crossing was working but the swaying "wig-wag" signal was not.

"Gladstone Road crossing was the scene of a serious accident some time ago when the Whangarei express ran into a road roller which was considerably smashed about."

The Star recounts that in 1930, former miner Robert Dunstan, 77, was crossing the line at Lloyd's Avenue – the apostrophe had popular use in those days – when he was struck by a train and died.

Community leaders often complained to the government. In 1935 Eden's Independent MP A J Stallworthy complained to Prime Minister George Forbes complained about

the crossings in Mt Albert saying they were a grave danger to the public.

"Crossing on roads other than main highways," Forbes replied, "will not be dealt with under the programme referred to by the honourable member, and in respect of any of these the local bodies should communicate with the Government Railways Board."

In 1944 Arthur Richards, the Labour Party MP for what was the Roskill electorate – and in 1946 the first Mt Albert MP – stood up in debating chamber.

"I've not asked the Minister of Railways for anything for years," he said, producing, one newspaper reported, an "accompaniment of incredulous laughter...."

What he wanted as a ramp on what was

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then Gladstone Road over the railway line. It was urgently needed, he said, because thousands of people had to use the crossing and children had to use it to reach three

schools in the neighbourhood.

Bob Semple, the railways minister, unhelpfully replied that there were 500 dangerous crossings around New Zealand

demanding attention – and that Mt Albert would have to wait its turn. Eventually the large four-lane bridge was built across the line.

### M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

**23 February 2013 (Saturday) 2pm** “A House’s Story – Hunting for the Past of your Home and Property.” A how to guide from **Lisa Truttman**. Have you or your friends ever wanted to find out the history of your property? Bring your friends along to this sure to be popular talk at Ferndale House, New North Road, Mt Albert. \$2 entry fee at door. Open to all.

**10 March 2013 (Sunday) 1.30pm.** Auckland Jewish Synagogue and cemetery trip with commentary by Dr Michael Bassett. Bus leaves from outside Senior Citizen's Hall (next to Rocket Park, Mt Albert) at 1.30pm. \$15 per person. MAHS members and friends welcome. RSVP to Brian Ph 626 6664

**11 May 2013 (Saturday)** Ferndale House – Art and Object Valuation

### ROCKY NOOK’S XMAS EVE TRAGEDY

#### TERRIBLE TRAM ACCIDENT IN AUCKLAND THREE PEOPLE KILLED TRAGEDY IN KINGSLAND

It was Christmas Eve, 1903, and double-decker tram Number 39 was heading downtown from Kingsland – or Rocky Nook as it was often known then - packed with workers and shoppers.

It was 8.15 pm and had just gone dark when the tram, under the charge of Ernest Thompson, was going up Eden Terrace. It passed into a loop to await another car.

Thompson cut the current and applied the hand brake. It did not work and the car began to go back.

Finding the car unmanageable the motorman called to the conductor to apply the rear brakes. It failed to work and the tram gathered speed down the incline.

The trolley pole drawing electricity from the overhead line bounced off and thrashed around the tram’s open top deck. In the

darkness a woman was the first to die as the pole hit her.

Some with walking sticks, tried to steady it or guide it to the wire, but did not succeed. No 39 rolled on, around 800 metres, toward another city bound tram, No 32.

The driver of the latter could see what was coming and tried desperately to reverse.

He managed to get going backward but a collision was inevitable and by the time it was over, three people were dead and 50 injured. Some reports later had up to 100 people hurt.

News spread quickly through the country thanks to the United Press Association, later the now defunct New Zealand Press Association.

From the Auckland Star, 26 December 1903: On Thursday evening two tramcars on the

Kingsland circuit, crashed together at Rocky Nook.

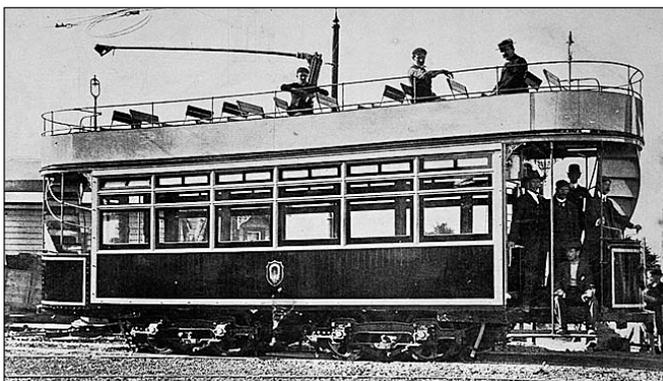
Three persons were killed and three others are in a critical condition and fifty badly injured.

The killed were Miss Hogarth, Benjamin Lindsay and Wm Caley. Mrs A. Caley, of Waihi, was seriously injured, both feet being crushed and she is suffering from general collapse.

WAIHI, Saturday. – A gloom was cast over Waihi this morning when the news came through of the distressing tramway accident at Auckland on Christmas Eve in which Mr and Mrs Caley were seriously injured.

Mr Caley only left Waihi on the day of the accident and joined his wife, who had preceded him to the City. Much sympathy is felt for them by the whole community.

### A DOUBLE DECKER TRAM AND KINGSLAND TERMINAL. AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL PHOTO



Reports spoke of a Miss Hill with “a fearful gash on her head” and the “little child Blundell ... still very bad.

Various accounts of what happened came out in further reporting and from an inquest conducted by Stipendiary

Magistrate Captain Herbert Brabant.

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## MAGISTRATE BRABANT



Carpenter Edward Freeman had just gone into a barbershop in Kingsland.

"I had just got inside the shop when I heard some screams," he said.

"I ran out and saw that the electric lights of the car were out and the pole off the wire. It was going at a terrible rate - I should say 50 miles an hour. The small car was lifted and must have gone a quarter through the other; so that the people in the double decker must have been the most injured.

Several passengers were hurled from the - top deck. Others, struck by the swinging trolley-pole, lay unconscious. Some had jumped from the car.

Top deck passenger George Pollard suffered mild injuries.

"All went well till we were halfway up Eden Terrace, where there is a loop. When we got on the loop the car stopped and then immediately, went back gathering speed down the hill, till it attained an enormous pace."

Then the trolley pole came off.

"It swung violently backwards and forwards, and several passengers tried to catch it, with their walking sticks in order to prevent it from striking them when it came to a cross wire." Then they saw the other tram: "The cars

telescoped with an awful impact, throwing several passengers off to the road." No 32 penetrated the double decker for one-quarter of its length.

Labourer Charles Morris was among the first to reach the smashed trams.

Seventy-year-old Kingsland gardener Mr Lindsay was trapped. Morris tried to help him.

"As I did so he lifted his head. I asked him if he was badly injured. He muttered a reply which I could not catch. I could do nothing for him."

Miss Cassie Hill was also trapped as men struggled to try and pull the two trams apart.

"For ten minutes the crowd waited helplessly till another tramcar arrived, and then, with ropes attached to this, the two wrecked cars were parted," the Auckland Star reported.

"Stretchers and vehicles were hastily procured, and doctors hurried to the scene in great numbers."

Between Eden Terrace, where the tram had started rolling, and the collision point, the street "seemed to be filled with hysterical spectators, with at short intervals unfortunate people - men, women, and, children - who had a few seconds before been in the sickening downward rush of the great, two-deck car.

"Maimed forms lay on the ground at intervals, and many people were walking or being assisted off the street with, blood-marked faces and hands or otherwise manifesting obvious signs of having sustained severe injury.

"The women and children, lucky, seemed to have suffered the least. This was partly done to their being mostly inside of the car, and to not running the risk of jumping off, while to the credit of many of the male passengers it

is said that they did all they could to calm and assist the women and children, often at increased risk of their own lives."

Nearly all the passengers were from Kingsland, Mt Eden and Mt Roskill.

"There was scarcely a household in the neighbourhood that had not a representative or a friend on one of the cars.

Mr Lindsay did not survive, nor did 23-year-old Ann Young Hogarth, 23, of neither Mt Eden nor Rocky Nook accountant William

Caley, 49. Miss Hogarth was the person knocked out by the pole.

Auckland Electric Tramways Company chief electrical engineer Micklell Carey issued a statement that largely blamed the motorman who, as the tram picked up speed, ran to the other end of the car to apply a reversing lever.

"Instead of reversing the lever gently and up to a certain point, as instructed, he reversed violently, with the result that the automatic circuit breakers sent through a tremendous rush of current and dis connected everything on the car.

"Even at that moment it would not have been too late to prevent the collision had the motor man simply applied the emergency brakes, which are most reliable in every respect. The cars are fitted with reversing gear, and these were promptly used by the motorman in charge of the combination car; in fact, his car had started to go backward when the double decker dashed into him, but he had not time to avert the collision."

- Michael Field

Ranleigh's English cottage  
**John Childs**

Much of the land in Mt Albert contains villas and bungalows so it is interesting when another traditional but different style of building is found. One of these is at 4 Ranleigh Road.



### Old and new

The bones of the building date back to 1936. It is in the English Cottage style, created by architect Sholto Smith. He came from Canada



arriving in Auckland in 1920. Buildings he and his partners designed included Shortland Flats in Shortland Street, Chancery Chambers in O'Connell Street and the Lister Building in

Victoria Street as well as numerous residential buildings.

This building as with others was characterised

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by concrete construction with stucco applied, lattice windows, some stained glass windows, shutters and arched entrance/porch and Marseilles tiles on the roof. Originally the house had no garage, it was added later.

The first owner was Mrs E. Braithwaite. The Braithwaite family lived in the building till the mid 1990s when the building was sold. In the late 1990s the building had become

rundown (see photo). The new owners Peter and Kaye Bowen asked Mt Albert architect Jock Halley to design extensive alternations to meet their needs. In 1997 Jock submitted a resource consent to the Auckland City Council to alter and extend the building and add a garage/games room building at the rear. The style, materials and detailing for the building matched the existing house.

The result is an attractive two level building with a building behind which still retains the attractive planted front yard with its matching wall with a hedge behind.

It makes an important contribution to the architecture of the street and contributes to the rich fabric of residential buildings in Mt Albert.



January 2013

## Beyond Mt Albert to the grave

After the Earthly life of Mt Albert, those who move on have for over a century ended up at Waikumete Cemetery. Matthew Gray, who stalks the headstones looking for stories, touches on some from Mt Albert.

Retired land court judge John Rogan owned a large block of land where Gladstone Road (now Carrington Road) met New North Road. Much of it ended up as the railway line.

He was in his 60th year when he finally decided to take a trot down the aisle. His bride was Lucy Turner Reynolds, still in her early 20s and originally from Cambridge in the Waikato. The pair had their first child in 1881 and at least six others over the next decade.

But any notion of a long and happy life together was cut tragically short by a series of deaths.

First to go was Lucy – struck down by illness at the age of 36 on June 6, 1897.

Judge Rogan laid his much-loved wife to rest at Waikumete Cemetery two days later and went home to grieve at Mt Albert.

It wasn't too long before he was forced to return for the burial of his eldest son, John Christopher.

The 15-year-old went missing while working on a farm near Whanganui on May 18, 1898.

He was last seen inspecting fences and a search party was sent out after his horse returned home without its rider.

John had earlier expressed a desire to ride across a lagoon on the property but was cautioned against it because of the varying depth. He remained enthusiastic, despite the warning, and it was no great surprise to anyone when searchers spotted tracks leading towards the area. The teenager's body was found submerged in the water and entangled in weeds. It was assumed he'd been thrown from his horse while attempting to make the crossing.

Judge Rogan was heartbroken – doubly so when, just five months later, his daughter Annie also died after a short sickness aged 13.

Annie was buried with her mother and brother.

Judge Rogan arrived at Taranaki aboard the Brougham in 1841 after emigrating from Ireland.

He was a licensed surveyor whose work was instrumental in establishing the sites of new settlements around the area in the years that followed. Later, as a judge of the Native Land Court, he travelled far and wide – particularly in the Kaipara Region where he was apparently well respected by Maori and European alike.

He settled at Helensville for a period where he was resident magistrate until 1875 when he shifted into the city.

Judge Rogan died in 1899, aged 76 and is buried at Waikumete with other members of his family, including a grandson – James Gannon.

Te Makiri, the house he built at Helensville in 1865, still stands and is registered with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

James Suitor chose the wrong man to confide in while planning to defraud his insurance company.

The Hawera-based tailor had taken out a healthy policy on his shop and had every intention to get the cash by foul means.

Housed in the same building was photographer Albert Edward Brookes.

The pair were on friendly terms and frequently joked together during the course of their working days.

But Brookes didn't think it was funny when his shop was badly damaged in a blaze police thought was deliberately lit by Suitor in March 1884.

He immediately recalled a conversation he had with the accused some six months before the fire.

The defendant, he said in the resulting court case, suggested arson and urged him to get insurance through the same broker he'd used.

"He will ask no questions or inspect your stock," Brookes remembered Suitor saying. "I am insured for 200. If you'd like to go in with me we can fix things up between ourselves. It will be a nice little sum for both of us to go away with."

Brookes also claimed Suitor had debts totalling 90 before the fire and had no idea how he would pay them.

His testimony, combined with evidence given by others, resulted in a guilty verdict.

Suitor was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Albert Brookes was born in Nottinghamshire, England and came to New Zealand in 1867.

He married Annie McLean from North America at Waipu seven years later and is thought to have worked as an assistant lighthouse keeper at Manukau Heads for a short time before setting up his photography business in Hawera.

Records suggest he also took his camera across the Tasman to Victoria where a brother had set up shop in the same trade.

But Brookes was living in Auckland in 1906 when he tried to step from a slow moving train carriage onto a platform at the Mt Albert Railway Station.

The 60-year-old slipped and fell under the wheels, suffering horrific and fatal injuries.

He was buried at Waikumete Cemetery where he lies today with his wife.

The grave also serves as a memorial to one of their several children, Second Lieutenant Ewen McLean Brookes, who was killed during World War One, aged 24.

A freak accident claimed the life of little Olwyn Marion Turley on December 2, 1917.

Taxi driver William Bruce was travelling along Balmoral Rd when his steering wheel suddenly jammed into a turning position.

He desperately hit the brakes as his car swerved on to the footpath at around 12 miles per hour.

But the cab continued to slide forward and William's heart sank as he spotted eight-year-old Olwyn a few feet ahead.

He and passenger William Spurrell shouted at the girl to get out of the way.

But Olwyn, who was walking home to Edendale Rd in Mt Albert after attending Sunday school, appeared confused and stopped to face the commotion.

The taxi dragged the child through a wire fence and hedge before coming to a halt on someone's front lawn.

The two Williams rushed to the girl's aid and found her non-responsive with abrasions to most of her body.

Olwyn stirred when lifted and was semi-conscious by the time she arrived at Auckland Hospital at around 5pm.

Dr William Gladstone examined her and found she was in a severe state of shock with evidence of internal injuries.

Olwyn died nearly three hours later.

Her grieving parents, health inspector Thomas Turley and his wife Marion, buried their girl at Waikumete Cemetery two days later.

An inquest into the death found the car was in top condition but had sustained damage after hitting a pothole that caused the steering to jam to the right.

No blame was attached to William and the rough condition of the road was found to be a factor.

Olwyn's mother died in 1946 and was buried with her. Thomas Turley remarried 14 years later and died in 1967, aged 85. He too was laid to rest with his daughter.

More Mt Albert graves in next issue.